

Message Text

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AMCONSUL MEDAN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 4041

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ID, PO

SUBJ: PROBABLY GOP POLICY TOWARD TIMOR

REF: JAKARTA 11598

1. IN TELEVISION INTERVIEW SEPTEMBER 18 MINISTER FOR
INTERTERRITORIAL COORDINATIO ALMEDIA SANTOS STATED
THAT IN TIMOR THERE ARE THREE CURRENTS OF OPINION: A
MINORITY WHO WANT TO BE LINKED TO INDONESIA (ALTHOUGH,
HE CLAIMED, RELATIVELY UNINTERESTED IN THE MATTER);
THOSE WHO WANT TO BE INDEPENDENT (WHICH HE DESCRIBED
AS AN UNVIABLE OPTION GIVEN THE ECONOMIC/WEAKNESS OF
TIMOR); AND THOSE WHO WANT TO REMAIN PORTUGUESE, WHOM
HE DESCRIBED AS THE MOST NUMEROUS. SIMILAR DESCRIPTION
OF ISLANDERS WISHES GIVEN TO AMBASSADOR BY JUNTA
MEMBER GENERAL GALVAO DE MELO ON SEPTEMBER 19.

2. THUS OPINIONS WITHIN GOP ABOUT RELATIVE STRENGTHS
OF DIFFERENT CURRENTS OF OPINION IN TIMOR ARE SHARED
BY THE RELATIVELY LIBERAL (ALMEIDA SANTOS) AND MORE
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RIGHT-WING (GALVAO DE MELO) GOP ELEMENTS. IT IS

UNCLEAR WHETHER THIS IS A REFLECTION OF THEIR POSSESSION OF HARD INFORMATION OR RELATIVE LACK OF DETAILED ATTENTION TO TIMOR, WHICH HAS BEEN ON BACK BURNER WHILE AFRICAN ISSUES DEALT WITH. IT ALSO FAR FROM CERTAIN HOW THEY WILL APPROACH TIMOR ISSUE. WHEN ASKED IF REFERENDUM WOULD BE HELD IN TIMOR, GALVAO DE MELO REPLIED AFFIRMATIVELY, THOUGH HE GAVE NO DATE. THIS CANNOT BE TAKEN AS DEFINITIVE INDICATION OF PORTUGUESE POLICY. REFERENDA IN ALL PORTUGUESE COLONIES AS FIRM GOP POLICY UNTIL REALITIES OF BOTH INTERNAL PORTUGUESE POLITICS AND SITUATIONS IN GUINEA-BISSAU AND MOZAMBIQUE FORCED ADOPTION OF OTHER ALTERNATIVES FOR THOSE CLONIES.

3. WE FEEL CERTAIN THAT, AS OF THE MOMENT, PRESIDENT SPINOLA, BUTTRESSED BY CERTAIN INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND BY THE FACT THAT THE SOLUTION ADOPTED FOR MOZAMBIQUE AGAINST HIS BETTER INSTINCTS LED TO RECENT VIOLENCE, FULLY INTENDS TO INSIST ON REFERENDA ROUTE FOR REMAINING COLONIES. HOWEVER, WE CANNOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT "REALITIES OF SITUATION" AS MAY BE REVEALED TO SOARES BY FOREIGN MINISTER MALIK IN NEW YORK OR CONVEYED TO ALMEIDA SANTOS WHO PLANS TRIP TO TIMOR SOON, MAY PERSUADE PORTUGUESE TO ADOPT ANOTHER APPROACH. OUR ESTIMATE AT THE MOMENT IS THAT RELATIVE ABSENCE OF BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PRESSURES ON GOP WITH REGARD TIMOR (IN CONTRAST TO AFRICAN COLONIES) WILL ENABLE SPINOLA TO INSIST ON PLEBISCITE IN WHICH ALL PARTIES WILL BE ALLOWED COMPETE.
SCOTT

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